

RENEWED HOPE FOR KEY LEGISLATION



The 1103 Political Page



*We Won —
Now What?*

by Chris Cutter, Assistant to the President

At this writing, Senate Democrats are two votes short of their quest for 60; but hope that support from a few moderate Republicans will allow them to pass bills that were halted in the last Congress by GOP parliamentary roadblocks. The Washington Post reported that Democrats are counting on Maine **Senators Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe** to provide the votes to block filibusters. Senate Finance Chairman **Max Baucus** (D-MT) is drawing up a health-care plan while **Edward Kennedy** (D-MA) is drafting his own proposal. However, Senate aides say that internal divisions among Democrats make it difficult to handicap the outcome of the biggest issues this year, including these comprehensive efforts to secure universal health insurance.

Democrats have voiced renewed hope of giving the Department of Health & Human Services the authority to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for lower prescription drug prices for seniors who participate in the Medicare Part D program. Shortly after taking power in 2007, House Democrats approved legislation for such authority (over the objections of the pharmaceutical companies and their lobbyists); but the plan failed in the Senate receiving only 55 votes in April 2007.

The good news is that Six Republicans who voted against the bill back then have since retired or were defeated and have been replaced by Democrats who are likely to support this measure.

Compiled from The Washington Post and The Alliance for Retired Americans

November 4th has come and gone. Barack Obama is the 44th President of the United States and it seems like everyone is personally taking credit as if they alone were the key to this awesome victory. Well, we in the Labor movement should be beating our chests as well because more than 250,000 union volunteers took to the streets in the largest independent voter mobilization in history. CWA played a major role in this combined union effort and the Local 1103 volunteers were one of the most active groups among them.

After all the selfless and tireless time given to elect our union-friendly, union-endorsed candidate, all that hard work proved it was worthwhile. Here are some interesting post-election statistics:

+ Union veterans voted for Obama by a 25-point margin. He lost among this group in the general election by 9 points.

+ Working Americans voted 67-30 for Obama.

+ 60% of union members identified the economy and jobs as their top issues with 84% saying strengthening the economy was the most important factor in their vote.

+ Union members identified protecting pensions and Social Security and reducing health care costs as the top priorities for the next administration.

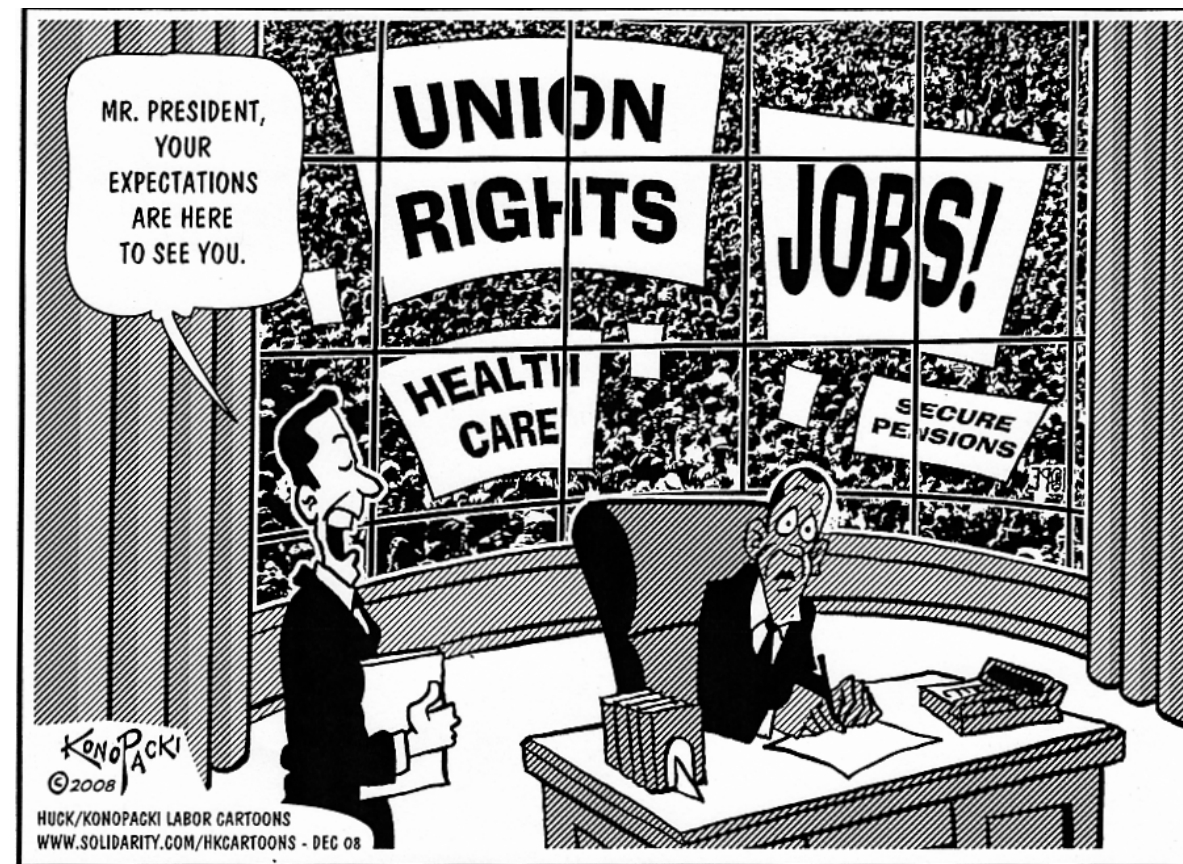
+ 75% say the new President and Congress have a mandate to strengthen the economy, create jobs and reform health care.

+ 81% of union members support passing the Employee Free Choice Act.

This proved that those Labor to Labor walks, phoning union members to turn out the vote, holding worksite meetings, conducting training at the Central Labor

healthcare system, our retirement security and our jobs. Until that is done, the battle still must be waged.

Right now we are facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and now more than ever we need to take care



Council for delegates to take back to their respective unions turned out the union vote for Obama.

But the elections are not over because that was just Phase 1. True, although we have elected a new President and Congress, and many good state officials as well, we still have won nothing ---Yet. We still need to improve our bargaining rights, our

of Main Street, not Wall Street. In Phase 2, working men and women must keep the pressure up to make this voter mandate for change a reality. We need to:

+ Restoring workers' freedom to join a union and bargain with their employers for better wages and benefits must become the law of the land and the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) will do that.

+ Reform our broken health care system to cut costs to families, increase access to quality care and provide coverage to the 50 million Americans without health insurance.

+ Re-regulate Wall Street to restore integrity to the banking and financial sectors and protect workers' hard earned money, their pension, their savings and their homes.

+ Have a broad-based economic recovery plan that provides aid to cash-strapped local and state governments to maintain vital services.

+ Extend unemployment benefits and increase funding for food stamps to provide relief for working families who are hurting because of the current failed economy.

Our first priority is the passage of EFCA but big business groups are gearing up to spend \$200 million to defeat it so corporations can keep all the power in the workplace and CEOs can block workers from having the security of a contract. On a recount on December 2nd, Georgia successfully stopped the Senate from having a super-majority and now can keep the filibuster alive; so the Employee Free Choice Act is not a given. The four Senators from New York and Connecticut have committed to vote for this, so give them a "Thank You" to remind them how important it is to America and that you are counting on their vote.